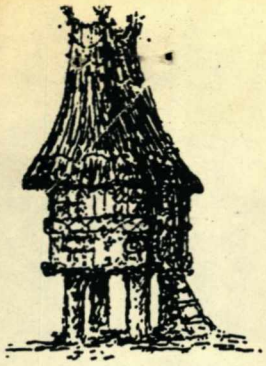

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# HOBART EAST TIMOR COMMITTEE

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"Mr Chairman, Respected Members of this Committee, I would like to thank you, on behalf of the Hobart East Timor Committee, for the opportunity to address you today.

It is ten years now since Indonesia invaded East Timor. The three positions held in regard to this invasion are represented on this Committee. Firstly - that of those nations which recognised the Democratic Republic of East Timor in 1975 as an independent nation which was, subsequent to that recognition, invaded by Indonesia. Secondly - that of those nations which continue to recognise East Timor as a Portuguese colony which has not yet been able to attain independence. And thirdly - that of those nations which regard Indonesia as having usurped Portugal's colonial role, and therefore has undertaken the obligation to prepare East Timor for independence.

All three positions require the United Nations to carry out the vitally important work of protecting and promoting the rights of the East Timorese people. But, as the majority of East Timorese remain Portuguese citizens, and as the majority of United Nations members hold the second position, we would like to elaborate on this.

Portugal has been criticized both for its failure to promote Timorese economic opportunities and initiatives, and for its failure to carry out a process of orderly de-colonization. It is correct to note Portugal's poor record in the economic sphere along with its failure to create an education system suited to East Timor's needs and sympathetically highlighting Timorese languages, history, geography and culture. We also believe that Portugal should have done more to try to eradicate diseases such as tuberculosis and malaria.

But it is also important to note that under the Portuguese administration, virtually all Timorese owned their own homes and

land as well as their own livestock, furniture and household utensils. To see an East Timorese poorly clothed or suffering from malnutrition was extremely rare and destitution was virtually unknown.

Portuguese colonialism in Timor was not marked by extra-judicial killings, torture, detention without trial or "disappearances". The territory was open and accessible, with a one-month tourist visa available in five to ten minutes from any Portuguese Consulate in Australia.

Portugal was required to report to this Committee each year and rightly was under strong pressure to begin the de-colonization process. In 1974, the Portuguese Government recognised its obligations and began preparing East Timor for independence. Whilst we are aware that this was not carried out with the orderliness, the commitment or the funding which the East Timorese had every right to expect, we must stress that the failure of the colonizing power to adequately meet all its obligations in no way diminishes or removes the right of the colonized people to self-government and independence. If this were not so, many of the nations represented in this room would not be here today.

The Portuguese Constitution commits the Portuguese Government to uphold the rights of the East Timorese people to independence. Though their efforts have not been particularly vigorous, we would stress that the failure of the Portuguese Government to achieve a just, negotiated solution owes more to the apathy and - regrettably - the hypocrisy of a number of U.N. member nations including Australia.

A clear obligation is placed on all members to uphold the U.N. Charter, and therefore to press for the withdrawal of all Indonesian troops, administrative personnel and colonists from East Timor. The purpose of the United Nations is to tackle injustice, promote peace, intervene in disputes, protect the rights of small nations and end colonialism. If the United Nations chooses to ignore Indonesia's occupation of East Timor, whilst calling on South Africa to withdraw from Namibia, it lays itself open to justified criticism. The East Timorese, like the Namibians, have the right to live free of foreign occupation.

We wish to draw your attention to several misconceptions which have hampered understanding of the situation. Colonies can be divided

into three general categories: firstly, those which are being prepared for self-government and independence; secondly, those which are held against their will by a colonizing power; and thirdly, those such as several tiny islands like Pitcairn Island which enjoy a large degree of autonomy but do not seek full independence.

East Timor's present situation places it clearly in the second category. Yet a number of individuals and governments have sought to place it in the third category. This is unacceptable, for there are no less than thirty smaller U.N. members. Though, in terms of population, grave concern must be expressed about the continued decrease in East Timor's population through conflict, torture and Indonesia's policy of forced birth control.

The second misconception which has permeated official attitudes in Australia - and undoubtedly in other countries also - is that East Timor is a part of Indonesia which got "left behind". Anyone who has travelled widely in both East Timor and Indonesia and therefore noted the very wide differences in culture, ethnic composition, history, colonial experiences and religious background, could not support this fallacy.

This misconception has led to the suggestion that if Indonesia had invaded East Timor thirty years ago instead of ten years, the U.N. would have shown no concern, and that the only reason Indonesia did not invade was because it was pre-occupied elsewhere. Given the attitudes of most Western Governments to Indonesia when it did invade, the first part of this assumption is undoubtedly correct. And given the fact that Indonesia's record of respect for the territorial integrity of its neighbours is not a good one, the implicit assumption that the countries which border Indonesia are safe only when Jakarta is pre-occupied domestically, may also be regarded as correct.

This assumption also fails to understand the processes at work within the region. The Moluccas were incorporated into Indonesia at a time when an independence movement was just forming, thus this process has continued both clandestinely and in exile. In West Irian, this process of political development had begun (with independence set for 1970) when the Dutch were forced to withdraw. The Indonesian administration has consistently sought to prevent the continuation of this process thus forcing it into a covert (and increasingly well-organized) movement. In East Timor, this process had advanced much further with

the declaration of independence occurring on 28th November 1975 - nine days before Indonesia openly invaded.

When Indonesia's economic problems no longer permit the disproportionate spending on the armed forces, these political movements which have been driven "underground" or hidden from the outside world by such means as restricted access, stage-managed visits, censorship, repeated military offensives, detention without trial and so on, will re-surface vigorously. The pattern of human rights abuses in both East Timor and Indonesia is closely linked to the belief that political development and the awareness of differing cultural and national identities must be suppressed.

East Timor highlights this situation. Although the Indonesian military expenditure is estimated to be $1 million per day, although it is equipped with modern weaponry, and although it has herded the majority of East Timor's people into "strategic hamlets", it is debatable whether Indonesia controls more than 60% of East Timor. The strength and cohesiveness of the resistance can be linked to the degree of political maturity and the sense of a clearly perceived national identity. This fact augurs well for the future of East Timor after independence.

We would also like to draw your attention to several economic factors. The Australian Government has recently announced the granting of $24 million in aid to West Timor mainly for the development of water supplies. In the last ten years, Australia has provided only $9 million in aid to East Timor. We do not begrudge the West Timorese people a better standard of living, but implicit in this comparison is the assumption that, even after ten years of war and dislocation, East Timor remains more prosperous than West Timor. In terms of infrastructure this is correct; for even the most casual of tourists visiting East Timor under Portugal and West Timor under Indonesia, noted the greater poverty and neglect evident in West Timor. In human terms, East Timor is a tragedy of massive proportions.

It is precisely because of the poverty and neglect of eastern Indonesia, that the government in Jakarta saw the FRETILIN programmes of practical, village-level development as so threatening. We would also point out that for the Indonesian Government to spend billions of dollars fighting in East Timor, yet not be able to find sufficient funds to provide its own

citizens with clean water indicates a serious distortion of priorities. All those nations which express their concern and friendship for Indonesia's people might reflect on this. For such concern is mere rhetoric unless combined with a commitment to end the involvement of Indonesia's people in an illegal and ignoble war.

Finally, we turn to the future. To fulfil its obligations, the U.N. must consistently press for an Indonesian withdrawal. After that, two positions could be adopted - an interim Portuguese administration or an interim U.N. administration. Either administration must be short-term with its duties being to assist the East Timorese to return to their land, rejoin their families, seek those listed as "disappeared", provide medical help to those who have been tortured, assist in the return of East Timorese held in Indonesian jails and oversee the orderly departure of Indonesian troops and colonists. In the case of a U.N. administration, we urge that under no circumstances should Indonesia be permitted to share in the administration.

We are depressingly well aware of the result of such an arrangement in Dutch New Guinea. That situation brought shame on the United Nations - for, not only was the nation which had bullied the Dutch out of New Guinea given full administrative control, but was also given the right to carry out the act of self-determination. As the Dahomey representative to the U.N. pointed out "This is the first time in United Nations history that the consultation (act of free choice) will be entirely organized by the party (Indonesia) most directly concerned in having the results favourable to it." In 1964, Professor Charles Fisher (London University) pointed out that "if the rule of one race by another is an anachronism in the world of today it is Indonesia, not Holland, that will have to justify it from now on in West New Guinea". But we know that Indonesia was <u>not</u> required to justify its position, and that the majority of U.N. members meekly endorsed an act of self-determination so blatantly unfair that it is derisively referred to as the "Act of No Choice" or the "Act Free of Choice".

You will appreciate why we are so deeply concerned that the mistakes and lack of integrity so evident in regard to West New Guinea, not be repeated by the United Nations in regard to East Timor. That the people of both countries have been denied the means by which to freely express their wishes is a major factor in their decision to seek their rights through armed struggle. It must be obvious that peace and stability are diminished each time a country

is denied the legal means by which to attain self-government and independence in accordance with their rights as set out in international law.

We ask that you bear this in mind and that all your deliberations in regard to East Timor are firmly grounded in an understanding of their rights as colonial peoples to achieve nationhood.

Thankyou".

(N.B. We have used the term West New Guinea to refer to the country which Indonesia calls Irian Jaya, and its own people call West Papua)

This statement was presented by Mr Matthew Francis on behalf of the members of the Hobart East Timor Committee:
Father Julian Punch (President)
Mrs Jennie Herrera (Secretary/Treasurer)
Mr Peter Newton (Vice-President)
Honourable Michael Hodgman QC MHR
Reverend Paul Kruse
Mr Noel Miley
Mrs Betty Nicholson
Sister Elizabeth Compton
Dr Phillip Eldridge
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This statement was endorsed by:
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Senator Michael Tate
Womens International League for Peace and Freedom (Tasmania)
Mrs Aileen Walters
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Hobart Quaker Peace Committee
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Mr Peter Cundall
Len and Maxine Barry
Carol and Dougald McLean
Mr Allan Evans
Mr Rana Roy
Mr Steve Reglar
Dr Richard Herr
Doreen and George Shenman
Dr Frank Meumann
Dr Ann Medlock
Tom and Robyn Errey
Kerry and Les Eyre
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Mrs Rosemary Brown
Mrs Val Nichols
Mr M Everett
Mr Ian Paterson
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Mr John White MHA
Mr Michael Mansell
Mr Chris Webster
Mr Douglas Parkinson
Rev Marc Wessels,
Robert and Suellen Callant
Drs J and A Halliday
Dr Victoria von Witt
Mr Andrew Wells
Mrs Judith Reindl
Mrs Helen Stewart
Jeff and Liz Francis
Mr Adam Coleman
Joy Gough
Megan James
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